
From: Chiara D'Amore <cdamore@cei.earth>
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Good evening County Council Members,

Thank you for receiving community testimony on the County's operating budget tonight. Attached please find both my oral testimony as well as the signatories to the Community Ecology Institute's budget support sign on letter.

Sincerely,

Chiara

[Chiara D'Amore](#), Ph.D.

(she/her/hers)

Executive Director

[The Community Ecology Institute](#)

*Please note, I often work in the field and am away from my computer at those times. Non-urgent emails may take several business days for a response. If your need is urgent, please contact me at 443-832-3824.

[Be an "evergreen" giver in CEI's operational support campaign!](#)

CEI humbly acknowledges the Indigenous people who were wrongfully removed from their ancestral lands where we live and work today. We offer our deepest respect to the [Piscataway Conoy Tribe](#), and all other tribes Indigenous to the central Maryland region where our organization is based. To learn more about the Indigenous people where you live, visit [Native-Land.ca](#).

Good evening County Council members,

My name is Dr. Chiara D'Amore and I live in Columbia. I am testifying tonight on behalf of the Community Ecology Institute, a Howard County-based non-profit with a mission to cultivate communities where people and nature thrive together.

We come before you with great appreciation for the County's support of the Community Ecology Institute over the past five years. Tonight, I want to share the cumulative impacts CEI achieved for and with the community last year and our vision for the year ahead.

In 2023:

- We had our first year as the new stewards of the Green Farmacy Garden, a unique plant sanctuary and teaching garden in Fulton
- We completed the Gray-Howell Community Engagement Center at Freetown Farm, which provides accessible, year-round space for our staff and programming for the first time
- We engaged more than **3,500 diverse people** who participated in our seven core intergenerational experiential education programs for a total of over **52,000 hours** of community building and learning! These cumulative numbers reflect:
 - 74 Green SEEDS program interns
 - 103 Roots and Wings Learning Community program students
 - ~340 Community of Families in Nature program participants
 - ~600 people who came to Freetown Farm to buy plants and produce
 - ~610 Nourishing Gardens program participants (32 of which were green jobs trainees – we have planted over 40 edible gardens in public spaces!
 - ~620 volunteers at Freetown Farm and the Green Farmacy Garden
 - ~1,200 workshop and event participants at our properties and collaborating locations in the community.

In 2023 we also ***grew tons of farm fresh food, which was made available to 24,000 community members facing food insecurity*** through our partnerships with local organizations including Laurel Advocacy and Referral Services, the Grassroots Crisis Intervention Center, Columbia Community Care, and the Howard County branch of the NAACP.

Through all our work, CEI seeks to foster the health of our community members and this special place we call home. We showcase and teach evidence-based best practices in these areas that are specifically responsive to Howard County's natural and social ecosystems. For example, research on "blue zones" - places where people live extraordinarily long and healthy lives - tells us that keys to collective community health include making it possible for people to have a primarily plant-based diet; move their bodies naturally throughout the day; have daily practices that reduce stress; enjoy a sense of belonging; and have purpose for their lives. CEI directly and actively supports each of these aspects of individual and community health through our programming.

CEI envisions a world of thriving communities rooted in healthy relationships with nature. This year we will be updating our strategic plan to reflect our **growth over just the past five years which includes a doubling of property, a tripling of programs, a quadrupling of team members, and more than a 200% increase in our annual revenue and expenses.**

One thing that is clear is that CEI will continue to focus on tangible, community-level change at the intersections of environment, education, equity, and health. For example, in 2024 one of our primary areas of focus is on climate change engagement and education. We have strategically assessed all our work to ensure that it aligns with the county's new climate action plan and are using our programming to actively engage each person that we reach with ways that they can be a part of the climate solution.

With my testimony I have submitted more than 200 signatures and notes from our community members, asking you to support CEI in the county's operating budget. I'll close with several quotes that they want to share with you:

"As a senior at 90y, CEI has given great meaning to my life. I have had the opportunity to teach children and above all I have witnessed the grand involvement of so many people of all ages and ethnic backgrounds participate in collective, cooperative community projects. Those projects have enormous meaning in this changing world."

"CEI provides "third spaces" in the community (not work or home) that foster community and has contributed to mental health improvements for me and my loved ones."

"Working at CEI has been a true honor and has allowed me to build essential professional experience in urban agriculture while working closely to meet community needs. I believe so much in CEI's mission, and this funding will allow us to continue to meet immediate needs of our community while working towards systemic change that can eliminate food insecurity and improve the long-term health of our environment."

"Please support CEI as robustly as possible! CEI does an exceptional job of having leadership and inspiring volunteerism and benefiting our community in a way that represents the diversity of Howard County."

CEI is truly a unique place of diverse common ground in Howard County. Our work aligns with the vision of Columbia as a garden for growing people and with the determination for Howard County to be the best county for all. We know that Howard County leaders are committed to the health of our community members. We deeply appreciate your support and ask that you maintain impactful funding for CEI in the county's forthcoming operating budget. Thank you very much.

May-24

Dear Howard County Executive Ball, County Council Members, and County Leadership,

Thank you for including support for the Community Ecology Institute (CEI) in the County's fiscal year 2025 operating budget. As you know, CEI is a wonderful local success story that has touched the lives of so many people, especially over the past five years. From their two properties, Freetown Farm and the Green Farmacy Garden, and through their seven innovative programs (a Community of Families in Nature, the Roots & Wings Learning Community, the Green SEEDS Internship, Eco-stewards Volunteerism, Nourishing Gardens, Sustainability Skills Workshops, and AgroEcology in Action), CEI meaningfully nurtures people and partnerships while protecting and celebrating our local ecosystem. In 2023 alone CEI reached more than 3,500 distinct and diverse members of our community!

CEI's mission to cultivate communities where people and nature thrive together is in direct alignment with the County's priorities for healthy residents and a clean, sustainable environment. By working towards tangible, community-level change at the intersections of environment, education, equity, and health, CEI will continue to help the County innovate and lead in these essential spaces. With real appreciation for CEI's collaborative good works and positive impact in our community, I respectfully request that the support included for the Community Ecology Institute in the 2025 operational budget be kept intact as the budget is finalized.

Thank you,

CEI budget supporter name:	Residence:	Comment:
Adi Daniels	Baltimore	Working for CEI has fundamentally changed my life for the better, it has so rewarding getting to introduce hundreds of people to regenerative, climate-smart agriculture and food security.
Adiyah Ali, Ed.D.	Columbia	
Aisha Jordan	Columbia	
Akil Cole	Washington, D.C	
Alain Simard	Ellicott City	I've had great experiences at The Green Farmacy Garden over the years. Great place to visit and learn.
Albert Holm	Columbia	
Alexandra Lawrence	Columbia	CEI creates opportunities for me to help my daughter cultivate a love for the wildlife, people, and land here in Howard County!
Alice Underwood	Ellicott City	
Allison Korn	Columbia MD	CEI is a wonderful place that brings people together for worthwhile activities that enriches our community.
Alysha Carver	Laurel MD	
Amanda Morton	Columbia	
Amber Drenner	Ellicott City	
Amy Lynne Bers	Ellicott City	
Andrea Frank	Columbia	
Andrew Robert Heffner	Columbia	
Angela A Nichols	Woodstock	
Anisha Thompson	Ellicott City	
Ann Hackeling	Ellicott City	
Ann Wing	Columbia	
Anne Gonnella	Ellicott City	
Annie-Sophie Simard	Ellicott City	
Annora Bailey	Columbia	I donated when they first started this project and I love what they do at CEI. As an early resident in Columbia, I can see how CEI embodies the same philosophies I grew up with in Columbia. Please continue to support CEI in the budget to support future generations in Howard County, thanks!
April Lee	Ellicott City	
Ari Silver-Isenstadt	Laurel	
Arlene Kerber	Columbia	The Freetown farm is such a positive addition to the County. Their community involvement and environmental stewardship is needed more than ever.
Ashley Calkins	Ellicott City	
Audrey Flake	Washington, DC	
Ava Suko	Dayton	
Barbara Patterson	Clarksville	CEI is a priceless gem in Howard County. My daughter participated in the internship program, and the experience was incredibly valuable. CEI helped expand her horizons, and instilled the importance of giving back to her community.
Bethany D Gregg	Baltimore	

CEI budget supporter name:	Residence:	Comment:
Bettina Krause	Laurel	
Bhodi Tims	Laurel	
Blessing Enekwe	Columbia	
Brenda Kelly	Olney	CEI creates a beautiful opportunities for families to spend time outside together.
Brian Lau	Ellicott City	
Brittany Watkins	Columbia, MD	
Buffy Illum	Ellicott City	
C Vernon Gray	Columbia	
Caela Barry	Elkridge	I always learn something at CEI-- and I know that's a very tiny part of what is happening in this organization. Thank you CEI team for all you do to strengthen our local community!
Caitlin Roscoe	Columbia	CEI has some so much to get our family outside in nature. We love seeing our adopt-a-spot in partnership with CA through the seasons. Our children have had a chance to make real connections with people through their nature programs both on and off their properties.
Carla D'Anna	Laurel	I have watched CEI grow with great pride since its inception. It makes me pleased to live in Howard County that young and other citizens have this resource.
Carla Tevelow	Woodstock	
Carmella Hart	Ellicott City	
Carol Abbott	Columbia	This is a really valuable resource for families and children.
Carolyn Crooks	Columbia	Classes, events, healthy plants for sale, community garden plots, and just a naturally beautiful space to enjoy!!!
Carri Beer	CATONSVILLE	
Casey sites	Beltsville	We love roots and wings!
Cassie Kilroy Thompson	Clarksville	
Celia Duke Larsen	NORTHVILLE	I am so please Howard County and CEI see the value in my parents' garden and home in Fulton, the Green Farmacy GArden on Murphy Rd. I hope the county generously supports CEI!!
Celia Strickler	Fulton	
Chad Spearman	Elkridge	
Charles Chaffee	Ellicott City	They do a good work!
Charlie Goedeke	Laurel	
Chelsea Clark	Catonsville	I am proud to not only call CEI and Freetown Farm my place of employment but the place that feels like my second home. My son has spent so many of his formative years running around the farm and tagging along at our various events. The mission of CEI is very much engrained in his nature at this point and I am so excited to see how it plays out in his life and how CEI blossoms even more in the future.
Chiara D'Amore	Columbia	CEI needs the county's support to keep growing and serving the community!
Chris Roscoe	Columbia	
Christina Zepf	Laurel	
Christine Altom	Ellicott City	
Christine Crandell	Columbia	

CEI budget supporter name:	Residence:	Comment:
Christy Ferguson	Columbia	
Claudia Lafuse	Columbia	
Claudia Sommers	Jessup	
Colleen Vernon	Columbia MD	
Corine van der Weele	Ellicott City	
Courtney Lam	Columbia	
Crystal Morgan	Columbia	
Cynthia Marie Alden	Columbia	
Dana Belanger	Baltimore	I am a Roots & Wings teacher at CEI. I love my job and this magical land I get to work on, CEI, its mission, its impact, and its people.
Danielle Webber	Columbia	
Deborah Lavine	Clarksville	
Deeba Jafri	Elkridge	
Deidre Cauble		
Delena Williams	Odenton	
dina boogaard	ellicott city	
Eduardo Marin	Columbia, MD	
Edwin Gould	Columbia Maryland	As a senior at 90y, CEI has given great meaning to my life. I have had the opportunity to teach children and above all I have witnessed the grand involvement of so many people of all ages and ethnic backgrounds participate in collective, cooperative community projects. Those projects have enormous meaning in this changing world.
Elisabeth Ceysens	Columbia	The CEI reaches hundreds of people by giving the opportunity to connect with nature and the outdoors while fostering community at a time that could not be more timely. It provides a counterweight to or digital world that keeps pulling us further apart.
Elizabeth Gilbert	Savage	
Elizabeth O'Leary	Ellicott City	CEI has done an amazing job improving this site in a short period of time. It has become a true resource for Howard County. We support CEI through donations and strongly urge public support as well!
Elizabeth Reardon	Ellicott City	
Ellen Flynn Giles	Ellicott City	
Emily Prechtl	Baltimore	

CEI budget supporter name:	Residence:	Comment:
Eric J Walker	Columbia	CEI is doing the hard work of addressing serious environmental issues in our area, while simultaneously providing incredibly important knowledge and experience to young people and families. CEI is at the forefront of community-based environmental stewardship and they are a regional leader in this field. Not only do they provide knowledge and education (knowledge is power) , they also go out and physically do the hard work. They walk the walk so to speak. The myriad of benefits CEI and it's programming provide our people and area cannot be captured in one comment. Please support environmental stewards in Howard County- the need for action has never been greater and CEI gets the work done. CEI and CFIN are empowering our young people to be environmental leaders, which is evidenced when talking to kids in their programs- at a recent CFIN event I discussed the implications of divergent evolution on native and non-native plants with a 10 year old citizen scientist from the program! CEI gives me hope for the future of conservation and environmental stewardship.
Erica Coady	Columbia	
Erica Jones	Columbia	
Erick Estrada	Columbia	
Evelyn Mogren	Oakland Mills Village	As someone who donates time here, and in Scouting BSA, SOOOO many people donate their time to CEI that Ho Co really gets a big "BANG" for their buck with this place!
Frank Hopper	Columbia	
Gal C Chivvis	Highland	
Gary Krause	Laurel MD	
Gary Pilarchik	Glenelg	CEI provides of place of wellness, education, and community to the people of Howard County
Geoff Carton	Clarksville	
George Clark	Catonsville	
George Korch	Columbia	
Georgia Eacker	Ellicott city	
Georgiana Hardesty	Columbia	CEI is a wonderful pillar of community and their dedicated garden plots supporting local nonprofit causes like hopeworks are enough to support them, on top of all the wonderful community-building they supply!
Gerard P. Lioi	Columbia	
Gina Doh	Marriottsville	
Grace Goldman	Baltimore	
Gregory Lyon	Laurel, MD	I enjoy the Green Farmacy Garden and the programs offered there!
Griselda Osorio	Jessup	
Hannah Tiner	Catonsville	CEI provides "third spaces" in the community (not work or home) that foster community and has contributed to mental health improvements for me and my loved ones.
Harry Schwarz	Columbia	
Heather D'Amore	Columbia	
Heather Johnson	Catonsville	
Heidi Tilkens	Laurel	
Helen Bryson	Columbia	Wonderful asset for our community -the internship programs, gardens, food donations, plant sales all allow so many to access healthy food and learn how to grow it yourself.

CEI budget supporter name:	Residence:	Comment:
Holly Bohart	Ellicott City	
Ian Martinson	Columbia	
Isha McKnight	Hanover	
Jackie Stark	Columbia, MD	
Jacquelin T McCoy	COLUMBIA	
James Aguirre	Elkridge	Meaningful moments of purpose aligned to support and clear understanding. Benefits everyone.
James Carter	Clarksville	
Janssen E. Evelyn	Columbia	
Jason B Mabee	Ellicott City	
Jean Fregeau	Columbia	
Jean Silver-Isenstadt	Laurel	
Jeff Agnor	Clarksville, Maryland	
Jeffrey L Crooks	Columbia	CEI has proven to be an important asset to the community.
Jen Mayotte	Clarksville	
Jennifer Blondo	Highland, Maryland	I feel fortunate to be only 10 minutes from the farm and the joy and relaxation I feel from being able to be outside, in a perfectly imperfect venue like Freetown Farm, is invaluable.
Jennifer Konstantopoulos	Columbia	
Jennifer Miller	Catonsville	
Jennifer Sandler	Columbia	
Jessica MacCartee	Ellicott City	
Jessica Masciantonio	Fulton	
Jessica Ruhl	Woodbine	
Joanne Serelis	Clarksville	
John Halley	Elkridge	
Joi Howard	Crofton	
Jonathan Andre McKinney	Columbia	
Joseph Brager	Columbia	CEI has provided me with jobs, both paid and volunteer. CEI is full of people who want to make a positive impact on the community. They provide so much for many.
Joseph Solomon	Clarksville	
Joshua Geiger	Columbia	
Joyce Brager	Columbia	
Julie Deibel-Pundt	Columbia	This is such a valuable community space focused on sustainability and collaboration - two of the themes that encouraged me to move to columbia
Julie warner	Elkridge	

CEI budget supporter name:	Residence:	Comment:
Justin Chen	Columbia	Working at CEI has been a true honor and has allowed me to build essential professional experience in urban agriculture while working closely to meet community needs. I believe so much in CEI's mission, and this funding will allow us to continue to meet immediate needs of our community while working towards systemic change that can eliminate food insecurity and improve the long term health of our environment.
Karen Titus	Clarksville	
Kate Torrence	Baltimore	I deeply appreciate your workshops, and hope to attend more of them! I've also benefitted from the plant sales, and hope the CEI can continue to host events in the future that are beneficial to the community.
Katherine Flanagan	COLUMBIA	
Kathryn Bucolo	Columbia	
Katie Hall	Ellicott City	
Kellyn Mahan	Columbia	
Ken Crandell	Columbia	
Keri Eastridge	COLUMBIA	
Kerri Isenstadt	Elkridge	
Kerry Martin	Silver Spring	
Kia Payne	Laurel	I have learned so much about sustainability at Freetown Farm. I've learned about plants to support nature and out community. I've learned about ways to support my own family and subset of the overall community. CEI does so much with a limited budget using dedicated staff and volunteers. They could reach so more with county budget inclusion!
Kim Flyr	Columbia	
Kim Pezza	Jessup	
Kimberley Delmar	Columbia	
Kimberly Cleven	Columbia	This is a rare project and two of our children are blessed to be a part of the internship program. They are growing up in an electronic world were few know where their food comes from and fewer know how to grow it themselves. This program teaches them about the importance of caring for the ecology around them. If only adults understood storm water and why we need to manage it properly. I am very thankful for what this program offers.
Kimberly Dorsey Bronow	Ellicott City, Maryla	Please support CEI as robustly as possible! CEI does an exceptional job of having leadership and inspiring volunteerism and benefiting our community in a way that represents the diversity of Howard County.
Kimberly Keeley	Laurel	
Kirsten Burcat	Columbia, MD	CEI is doing wonderful education and outreach work! We are so lucky to have this organization in our community.
Kristen Bowman	Columbia	
Kristen Browne	Laurel	
Kristen Ryan	Columbia	Going to CEI events has become a regular part of my family's life.
Kristine Barbieri	Columbia	CEI is a great resource for children and adults to learn about nature, gardening, and taking care of our environment.
Kurt Schwarz	Columbia	I am a contributor to CEI, and support its mission of bringing people and nature together.

CEI budget supporter name:	Residence:	Comment:
LaTanya Robinson	Aspen Hill, Md	My son during the pandemic used their roots and wings program. I was so thankful we had this program where he could socialize with other kids and learn about the outdoors. He enjoyed feedong the chickens.
Laura Bacon	Columbia	
Laura H Salganik	Columbia	I am so impressed with the work CEI does.
Leah Halley	Elkridge	
Leslie Alexander	Fulton	
Lillian Bauder	COLUMBIA	
Linda Eastridge	Columbia, Maryland	CEI carries on important work that I don't have time to do myself, but helps me to feel like our community is organically alive and well and working to involve more and more people and supporting and enjoying our Outdoor resources. It provides our family with a great place to purchase organic produce nearby and at a reasonable price. I appreciate the safe, loving and educational homeschool environment that CEI makes possible
linda schiffer	columbia md	
Lindsay Kellogg	Odenton	
Lindsay Kreisher	Sykesville	CEI's educational and environmental programming has been so enriching for our family and friends. This organization works collaboratively across all lines and through all weather. CEI is truly a gift to everyone.
Lindsay Wagner	Glenwood	
Lindsey Sands	Columbia	
Lisa Goldstein	Woodstock	I am a Direct Support Professional. I work with an individual that lives with Down Syndrome. She enjoys volunteering in the gardens and the social aspects of being at CEI, aka freetown farm. I have also learned some things too. Please keep the funding for this special place that creates connections on multiple levels.
Lisa Marini	Fulton	
Lisa Otero	Laurel	
liz schoen	COLUMBIA	
Loni Cohen	Columbia, MD	I feel so grateful to have a resource like this right in our community! CEI has helped my family stay connected to nature through CFIN, workshops, volunteer opportunities, and Nourishing Gardens. They have created a welcoming community at Freetown Farm that feels like a respite from the every day hustle and bustle, and I hope will be here for many years to come.
Lynette Trumbore	Fulton	CEI is a wonderful resource for our community and deserves all the funding available to them.
Lynn Green	Laurel	
Mabrooka Chaudhry	Ellicott City	
Mackenzie Malli	Columbia	
Madelyn Bloom	Columbia	
Mae A. Beale	Columbia	This farm is a needed institution in our community, please support.
Maggie	Baltimore MD	The repair cafes have been so helpful! CEI is an incredible community resource to Howard County and the greater Baltimore region. A green educational space with programs for all ages.
Malynda Madzel	Columbia	
Margo Duesterhaus	Ellicott City	

CEI budget supporter name:	Residence:	Comment:
Maria Spiegel	Pikesville, MD	
Mark A Storch	Elkridge	A great way for children and families to learn about the environment!
Marny Helfrich	Columbia (King's Contrivance)	
Martine stuppard	COLUMBIA	Lots of learning about taking care of garden and flowers and very positive support from the staff
Mary Ann Barry	Columbia, Md 21045	
Mary Laituri	Columbia	
Mary Rodgers	Columbia	UUCG partnered with CEI to establish a nourishing garden at the Owen Brown interfaith Center. It has been a pleasure to work with such a dedicated group of people!
Mary Trumbauer	Columbia	
Maryam Stringer	Catonsville	CEI has brought joy and community into my family's lives.
matt wagner	glenwood	cei is a second home for us. it has allowed us to connect with families, friends and the community through many programs like roots and wings, garden markets, weekend hikes and outings, and more. without cei we would be hard to come by the folks we call family and the community we love to participate in weekly. we love their impact and ties to the community and discussions about stewardship, gardening, and character.
Matthew Jacobsen	Pasadena	
matthew wagner	glenwood	
Maya Silver	Columbia	
Megha Sheare	Ellicott City	My family has been involved with the wonderful Roots & Wings program
Meghan Patricia Cole	Columbia	
Michael Becker	Columbia, MD	
Michael Billard	Laurel	
Michael Sites	Beltsville	
Michael Wagner	Columbia, MD	
Michele Bickley	EC	
Michelle Heffner	Columbia	
Michelle Hinojosa-Melencio	Columbia	
Mindy Golden	Columbia	CEI does great work. I personally volunteer at Freetown farm and can attest to the wonderful programs and opportunities they provide to our community.
Miranda Whitham	Columbia	
Molly Nur	Ellicott City	
Monica Terry	Columbia, MD	
Natalie Anne Kovach Miskimins	Ellicott City	Thank you for supporting the Community Ecology Institute (CEI) in the County's fiscal year 2025 operating budget.
Natalie Coore	Joppatowne	
Nazish Mithaiwala	Columbia	I love the environment and the variety of plants. Very welcoming group.
Nicole Spearman	Elkridge	
Nicole Williams	Columbia	

CEI budget supporter name:	Residence:	Comment:
Niubol Malual	Glen Burnie MD	
Pamela Velez-Vega	Columbia	CEI provides a critical service to our community by giving families opportunities to engage with their children in nature. Thanks to CEI, I was able to take my children (and myself!) camping for the first time about six years ago. I am so grateful to CEI for this as it created a bond in my kids with nature. Having access to nature in a safe and nurturing environment is a privilege that not everyone can afford. CEI has been of tremendous value to families recovering from the mental health challenges associated with the COVID isolation. I urge Howard County leaders to continue supporting this wonderful organization. It is changing lives for the better in our county.
Patricia Smith	Columbia	
Patrick Curtis	Bethesda	
Paula J Bernal	ELLICOTT CITY	
Pete Doob	Columbia	
Peter Fath	Baltimore	
Philippa Benson	Glenelg	CEI is one of the reasons I moved to Howard County
Rachel Skelton	Woodbine	
Rachid Chaoua	Columbia	
Rebecca Reese	Fulton	
Rebekah Hager		
Regina Tassone	Baltimore	
Rev. Dr. Barbara Morton	Columbia	
Rian Hart	Catonsville	
Richard Gates	Columbia	
Richard L Leith	Elkridge	I have taken a number of classes of HCC students to CEI's Freetown Farm in alignment with their studies of environmental ethics, sustainability, climate justice, and food justice. CEI is an invaluable resource to the community in so many ways and the people and experiences there have had a tremendous impact on my students' understanding of these issues and how they might be dealt with locally and equitably.
Riley Middleton	Ellicott City	
Roberto Martin	Columbia	
Robin Hessey	Columbia	
Robin McClave	Dayton	
ROSEMARY TRIPOLI ROBINSON	LAUREL	CEI has provided a permanent place for Repair Cafe to work from.
Ross Tierney	Ellicott City	
Ryan Green	columbia	
Sally Jones	Clarksville	
Samantha Gloss		
Samara Porte	Columbia	

CEI budget supporter name:	Residence:	Comment:
Sandra Marie Price	Columbia	CEI and Freetown Farm have had an impact on me personally and professionally. I have learned about land (and community) stewardship, but the farm and CEI staff have provided ways to help me grieve during a time of great loss in my family over the past year.
Sara Smith	Elkridge	It has been amazing to me to watch CEI and Freetown Farm grow over the past 5 years; to come to the Farm in any season is to see both the culmination and the ongoing process of joyful, meaningful work. There is true community educational value on so many levels it is just staggering-storm runoff management, regenerative farming, up-cycling, nature-based education, home vegetable and pollinator gardening, forest management, the list goes on and on. And the addition of the Green Pharmacy Garden to CEI's properties both preserves the important work of ethnobotanist Dr. Jim Duke and continues the education and land management that property has provided for years.
Sarah Baumert	Ellicott City	My daughter has attended the Roots and Wings program for the past three years. I cannot think of a more wonderful, caring, respectful, hardworking community for her to be a part of.
Sarah English	Columbia	
Sarah Thober	Columbia	
Scout Yardumian-Grubb	Columbia	It's heartwarming to see a place dedicated to providing for the community and teaching children about the importance of nature and gardening. It's a nice little escape from the city grind where you can also talk to people without having to shout over all the noise.
Sean Miller	Laurel	
Shante Sims-Westray	Columbia-Running Brook	
Shelley Korch	Columbia	
Shiren Tehrani	Columbia	CEI is honored to have received robust inclusion in the Howard County government's proposed operating budget for the upcoming fiscal year. The budget will be voted on this month and now is the crucial time for us to show the community's support for CEI to ensure that our allocation remains intact.
Shyla Cogar	Sykesville	
Simon Sauvageau	Baltimore	CEI has provided me a way to live into my values by enacting climate action at a local level, developing meaningful community, and growing food for those most in need.
Smita Vazarkar	Ellicott city	CEI has been great place to learn about HoCo native plants, how to help our environment
Smrithi Raman	Columbia	CEI has provided wonderful learning and volunteering opportunities for our entire family, and we use their services/events almost every week. Please support this local treasure
Sophie Silver-Isenstadt	Columbia	
Stephanie Dignan	Woodbine, Md	The repair cafe has fixed many items and kept these items out of the landfill! Thanks to them!
Stuart Silver	COLUMBIA	
Susan Bannister	Columbia	The programs, community participation, and beauty of the structures and gardens on the property are a wonderful asset to the community at large. It brings a melding of Howard County's rich cultural and environmental heritages together to the benefit of all.
Susan E Hill	Columbia	Wonderful community space to connect with each other, appreciate nature and learn how to grow food.
Sydney Wallace	Ellicott city	
Sylvia Karman	Ellicott City	
Tameka Walker	Ellicott City	

CEI budget supporter name:	Residence:	Comment:
Tamim Sookoor	Ellicott City	A gardening course I took through CEI set me up to start a homestead garden in my backyard
Tammy Eves	Columbia	
Taylor Brumagin	Reisterstown	I am a soon-to-be graduate of the University of Maryland, College Park. I had the privilege of interning with CEI the summer of 2023. I could not imagine a better summer spent on the gorgeous property, working in the gardens, meeting some of the most passionate people, and learning about the importance of intersecting community with the environment. I am studying Environmental Science and Policy with a minor in Nonprofit Leadership. This was a truly perfect way for me to get my first look at what that career would look like. I specifically worked with AgroEcology program. I came in with little knowledge about food practices and regenerative farming but Justin, Simon, Peter, and Christy took the time to teach me and show me the wonders of growing healthy food and joy that can come from helping the community in such a profound way. This is truly a special place and I love checking in on all the work that they do to further the program. I fully endorse any way the Howard County Government can support their initiatives. Without financial support, I wouldn't have been able to further my passion and I fully believe that it is going to productive and crucial programs!
Teresa Weathington Guzman	Columbia	I've been to CEI's Freetown Farm with my family and had a great time! My son enjoyed seeing the gardens, we picked up a tree received through a local giveaway, and we played in the kids learning area / playground. We were amazed that this amazing resource for nature learning was just 10 minutes from our home.
Teri Saunier	Columbia	My children participate in their roots and wings educational program. CEI is making environmental impacts for our future, hopefully for generations to come.
Terri Berkheimer	Laurel	
Theresa Taylor	Columbia, MD	
Therese High	Annapolis	There is something special about this place. A place that I can learn, help, experience, laugh, love, and build. I pray it continues to move in forward progress.
Thomas Fador	Catonsville	
Tonya Aikens	Columbia	
Trista Plunkett	Ellicott City	
Valerie Stanford	Highland	
Veronica Grissom	Ellicott City	
William Isenstadt	Elkridge	
William P Webster	Columbia, MD	
Y.A.	Ellicott City, MD	
Yi Lii	Elkridge	Great internship program for teens!
Zaneta Trent	Howard County	

From: Kennedy <kpatte8945@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, May 13, 2024 8:52 PM
To: CouncilMail
Subject: Written Comments - County Budget

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

To whom it may concern:

My name is Kennedy Patterson, and I am a graduating senior at River Hill High School. I have had the opportunity to participate as an intern with the Community Ecology Institute (CEI) over the past year.

I understand that the County is considering its operating budget tonight, and I would like to take this opportunity to voice my strong support for a grant to CEI.

As a young woman of color, I cannot overstate the value of CEI in bringing the community together in positive and unique ways.

Specifically, CEI brings together interns from a wide range of backgrounds-- LGBTQ+, people with different abilities, various ethnicities and cultures-- in an environment that allows these groups to blend while developing critical life skills, encouraging environmental stewardship, and connecting various community entities all to build strong partnerships.

I would also like to share a couple of personal experiences that I believe demonstrate the value of CEI:

- As part of the internship program, we toured the Harriet Tubman Cultural Center in Columbia to learn about black history in Howard County. I was so impressed with the cultural center that I led an effort to organize a tour of the center for the Scholars Leadership Program at River Hill High School.
- CEI interns helped organize a clothing swap for the community. The event was highly attended and helped the environment by reducing waste and keeping potentially harmful textiles out of the landfill.
- I believe my internship experience at CEI was a key factor that helped me gain admission to the University of Maryland, College Park, for this fall. I know the CEI experience helped me stand out in an extremely competitive field of applicants.

I encourage you to continue supporting this special gem of an organization in Howard County.

Thank you for considering my comments and for supporting CEI.

Kind regards,
Kennedy Patterson

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Clarksville, MD 21029
(240) 274-0358

**FY25 Howard County Budget
County Council Public Hearing
May 13, 2024**

Support CSP funding

I am writing on behalf of the Association of Community Services (ACS) and our member organizations. As you know, we represent a wide range of nonprofits that serve all segments of Howard County's population – children, seniors, those with low-incomes, people with disabilities, immigrants, veterans... anyone who needs help. The services these nonprofits provide range from food assistance, housing, legal services, transportation, mentoring, and more. In short, they provide the essential services our community relies upon to be such a great place to live, work, and play.

Nonprofits stepped up in unprecedented ways during the pandemic to meet the most critical needs in the community, providing food, personal care for seniors and people with disabilities, emergency shelter, and mental health services. Many nonprofit staff served on the front lines, risking their own health and that of their families in that time of crisis to continue providing essential services. County Government turned to nonprofits to do more – and nonprofits delivered. The nonprofit sector proved its ability to be nimble, as it adapted quickly to meet our community's needs.

Now, nonprofit organizations are struggling more than ever to meet their own needs. Nonprofits have always been challenged to provide critical services with limited budgets and staff. Hiring and keeping staff has always been difficult because of the low pay and (often) a lack of benefits. But things have gotten much worse since the pandemic.

The nonprofits that Howard County relies on both for its safety net for vulnerable residents and quality of life services for all of our community... the nonprofits that stepped up and delivered in a time of crisis... that demonstrated their ability to be nimble and responsive to the needs of this community... These nonprofits need support from County Government, like never before.

We ask you to support the funding included in the proposed FY25 operating budget for the Community Service Partnerships grants program. CSP grants are a critical source of support for nonprofits, enabling them to continue providing the essential services that our community members rely on.

Please let me know if we can be a further resource to you.

Submitted by,
Lois Mikkila, Executive Director